AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended)) A process for producing iron oxide-containing pellets comprising agglomerating fine ore particles in the presence of a binder system to form green pellets, and heating said green pellets in stages to a final temperature in the range of about 1,275-1,350°C, wherein said binder system is substantially free of hydrophobic liquid and comprises
   (i) an inorganic binder and/or an organic binder, and
   (ii) a binder additive selected from boron-containing compounds, calcium fluoride, and combinations thereof, wherein the boron-containing compound is selected from boron oxide, calcium borate, sodium borate, boron nitride, and mixtures thereof .

2. (currently amended) The process according to claim 1 wherein the boron-containing compound is selected from sodium tetraborate, calcium tetraborate, and mixtures thereof~~boron oxide, calcium borate, sodium borate, boric acid, and boron nitride~~.

3. (previously presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the boron-containing compound is sodium borate.

4. (previously presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the binder system comprises a carboxymethyl cellulose as organic binder.

5. (currently amended) The process of claim 1 wherein ~~A process for producing iron oxide-containing pellets comprising the step of agglomerating fine iron ore particles in the presence of a~~ said binder system ~~which~~ comprises a cellulose ether and a binder additive selected from boron-containing compounds, calcium fluoride, and combinations thereof.

6. (original) The process according to claim 5 wherein the cellulose ether is carboxymethyl cellulose or a salt thereof.

7. (new) The process of claim 3 wherein said sodium borate is sodium tetraborate.

8. (new) The process of claim 1 wherein the boron-containing compound is calcium borate.

9. (new) The process of claim 8 wherein said calcium borate is calcium tetraborate.

10. (new) The process of claim 1 wherein said boron-containing compound is derived from ulexite, colemanite, Gerstley, Laguna Murray's, Gillespie, and mixtures thereof.

11. (new)) A process for producing iron oxide-containing pellets comprising agglomerating fine ore particles in the presence of a binder system to form green pellets, and heating said green pellets in stages to a final temperature in the range of about 1,275-1,350°C, wherein said binder system is substantially free of hydrophobic liquid and comprises

(iii) carboxymethyl cellulose or a salt thereof, and

(iv) a binder additive selected from boron-containing compounds, calcium fluoride, and combinations thereof, wherein the boron-containing compound is selected from sodium tetraborate, calcium tetraborate and mixtures thereof .